

Flora & Fauna

Make Your Own Flower Arrangement

Flowers have always symbolized life's special occasions and emotions. We use flowers for wedding decorations, Christmas ornaments and Valentine's Day offerings. Whatever the occasion is, a well-designed flower arrangement is a lovely way to celebrate life.

Instead of ordering from a florist, make your own flower arrangement! It's fun, creative and saves money. You can buy the flowers that you want and the few paper or plastic materials that you need to complete the arrangement, or you can also simply pick the flowers in your garden!

Here are important tips you can use when making your own flower arrangements:

1. **Purpose of the flowers.** Are they for a wedding, a birthday, a present for your mother or simply a home decoration? The purpose, together with the occasion, will help you decide the kind of flowers and accessories you will need. Also, decide earlier on if you are going to make a simple arrangement or an elaborate one so you will know how many flowers you'll need.

2. **Prepare your container.** For vase arrangements, choose your container first before picking out the flowers. It should have the correct height for the kind of flowers you want to use. For example, you may want to use a tall vase for a tulip arrangement.

Rinse out the vase with warm water, but also add a few drops of bleach to the water. This will clean the vase but will not hurt the flowers. Just make sure it is just a few drops. If you purchase flowers, a package of plant food is usually included, but if not, a teaspoon of sugar will do just fine.

Now, each flower has its own likes and dislikes. Freesia, for example, doesn't take kindly to bleach, so in this case use distilled water instead. A penny in the bottom of the vase will keep tulip petals closed a little longer. Tulips can still keep growing long after they are cut - some as much as an inch a day!

3. **Choose a color scheme.** For instance, do not combine red with pink roses, or yellow daisies with dyed green carnations. Choose flowers that appear and smell good when blended with others. Also, fill in the gaps with leafy greenery and baby's breath.

4. **Create a focal point.** For large arrangements, rather than picking many tiny blooms, select a few large flowers that will act as focal points. Too many small flowers will distract the eye and make the arrangement seem disorganized rather than refreshing.

5. **Prepare your flowers.** Remove any leaves that are sitting below the water line, but leave as many as you can above the water line. You will need this in the overall look of your flower arrangement. If your flowers are roses, try and leave the thorns. When you strip them off, in fact, what you are doing is injuring your flower and giving more opportunity for it to die. Cut about an inch of the bottom of the stem.

This allows the water to flow to the plant freely. You should try to do this while you have the flower submerged in water. If you cut it without the water, then the stem will draw in air, which stops the stems from drinking and will cause an early death. In cutting your flowers, be sure you cut the stems at an angle. It will let them absorb water properly and stay fresh longer.

Everyone that receives flowers certainly receives a gift of love. By taking the time to personally arrange flowers for someone you care about, you add a little something extra to an already special gift!

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Cleaning Corner

Removing Allergens and Dust Mites from Stuffed Animals and Toys

If your children have stuffed animals, it can be alarming just how easily they can become laden with allergy-causing dust mites. However, it is just as easy to kill all the dust mites in stuffed toys without having to constantly be washing and drying them.

To kill dust mites in stuffed animals, simply wrap them in plastic - such as placing them in a Ziploc bag - then just pop them in the freezer for a few hours. Freezing will kill the dust mites living within the fluff and stuffing.

This tip also works on pillows, too! Just make sure you wrap them well in plastic, and place them in the freezer a bit longer since they are so much larger than stuffed animals.

Do this every week or so to keep the toys dust mite free. It is easy to just pop them in right before going out and running errands, that way you don't need to worry about your child wanting the stuffed toy while it is being de-mited!

June

- 1786 The first commercially made ice cream was sold at fountains across America
- 1835 The P.T. Barnum Circus embarked on its first national tour
- 1857 James Gibbs patented the world's first sewing machine
- 1869 Ives W. McGaffey received a patent for an invention he called the vacuum cleaner
- 1876 Bananas were introduced to the American fruit market after they were introduced by the nation of Columbia to attendees of Philadelphia's Centennial Exposition
- 1917 10 million men register for the World War I draft
- 1933 The nation's first drive-in theater opens in New Jersey
- 1947 The Lassie Show aired for the first time on the ABC radio network
- 1977 First personal computer (Apple II) goes on sale

Health Tips: Stop Stressing – Think Positive!

The most common complaints at the doctor's office are stress-related symptoms—headaches, backaches, insomnia, stomachaches and so on. The kids are screaming, the bills are due, and there's a pile of work on your desk that seems to be growing at an absurdly swift pace. It's undeniable - life often seems full of stress. But understanding the sources of stress - big and small, internal and external, short-term and long-term - is an important part of stress management.

Acute stress, also known as the fight-or-flight response, is your body's immediate reaction to a threat, challenge or scare. The acute stress response is immediate, it's intense, and in certain circumstances, it can be thrilling. Examples of stressors that may cause an acute stress response are a job interview, a fender bender or an exhilarating ski run.

Chronic stress results from long-term exposure to acute stress. The chronic stress response is much more subtle than is the acute stress response, but the effects may be longer lasting and more problematic. The stressors which may lead to chronic stress are the nagging, day-to-day life situations that often seem unrelenting. Think relationship problems, major life changes, environment, work difficulties, unpredictable events and financial woes. Not all stress stems from things that happen to you, some of the stress response can be self-induced. Those feelings and thoughts that pop into your head and cause you unrest are known as internal stressors. Examples include: fears, uncertainty and unrealistic expectations.

While mild stress can actually be beneficial - it can spur you into action, motivate and energize you - it's often the buildup of the little things that can really "stress you out." Persistent stress can lead to many adverse health problems, including:

- **Physical symptoms**, such as headache and fatigue
- **Mental symptoms**, such as poor concentration
- **Emotional symptoms**, such as irritability and depression
- **Social symptoms**, such as isolation and resentment

Unfortunately, stress is here to stay. Face it, not a day in your life will go by without encountering a situation or event that may trigger stress. But understanding the sources of your stress is the first step in learning to manage it.

Positive thinking is a key part of an effective stress management strategy. Is your glass half-empty or half-full? How you answer this age-old question about positive thinking may reflect your outlook on life, your attitude toward yourself, and whether you're optimistic or pessimistic. In fact, some studies show that these personality traits - optimism and pessimism - can affect how well you live and even how long you live.

Evaluate your thinking. Do you tend to catastrophize situations - always expecting the worst? Do you polarize things - if it's not perfect it's a total failure? Do you personalize things - if it goes wrong, you take on blame whether you're responsible or not?

If you tend to have a negative outlook, don't expect to become an optimist overnight. But with practice, eventually your self-talk will automatically contain less self-criticism and more self-acceptance. You may also become less critical of the world around you. When your state of mind is generally optimistic, you're able to handle everyday stress in a constructive way. That ability may contribute to the widely observed health benefits of positive thinking.

Kid Corner: The Importance of Discipline

Learning how to effectively discipline your child is an important skill that all parents need to learn. Discipline is not the same as punishment. Instead, discipline has to do more with **teaching**: teaching your child right from wrong, how to respect the rights of others, which behaviors are acceptable and which are not, with a goal of helping to develop a child who feels secure and loved, is self-confident, and knows how to control his impulses.

If you are having difficulty disciplining your child, it is important to remember that you may not be doing anything wrong. All children are different and have different **temperaments** and developmental levels and a style of discipline that may work with other children may not work with yours.

You should understand that how you behave when disciplining your child will help to determine how your child is going to behave (or misbehave) in the future. If you give in after your child repeatedly argues, becomes violent or has a temper tantrum, then he will learn to repeat this behavior because he knows you may eventually give in (even if it is only once in a while).

If you are firm and consistent, your child will learn that it doesn't pay to fight doing what he is eventually going to have to do anyway.

Important Reminders about Discipline:

- **Be consistent** in your methods of discipline. This applies to all caregivers. It is normal for children to test their limits. If you are inconsistent in what these limits are, you will be encouraging more misbehavior.
- **Stay calm** and do not get carried away when your child misbehaves. Avoid yelling and screaming, since this can teach your child that it is all right to lose control if you don't get your way. If you feel like things are escalating too much, take a break to regain your composure.
- **Avoid too much criticism.** Make sure your child understands that it is the behavior that made you unhappy, but you will always love him.
- **Avoid too much praise.** You don't need to be continuously praising your child, especially for routine activities, because it will make your comments less effective.
- Don't focus on **negatives** all of the time, especially when offering positive reinforcement. It is much better to say 'I like that you put all of your clothes away,' instead of saying 'I like that, for once, you finally got around to putting your clothes away without my asking.'
- **Avoid physical punishment.** Spanking has never been shown to be more effective than other forms of punishment and will make your child more aggressive and angry.
- Remember to give **rewards and praise** for good behavior.
- Understand the difference between rewards and **bribes**. A reward is something your child receives after he has done something, while a bribe is given beforehand to try and motivate your child to do what you want. Bribes should be avoided.
- **Be a good role model.** That old saying, "Do as I say, not as I do," **never** works. If you want your child to display good behavior, then you have to model the behavior you want him to have. Parents are the single greatest influence in a child's life. Your children will learn more from you than they will from teachers, coaches and the media.
- Most importantly, provide your child with a **safe environment** in which he feels secure and loved.

Grilling brings out the sweetness in fruit and adds a light smoky flavor. Add a scoop of ice cream, some crumbled cookies or whipped cream and you have a dessert in minutes! Here are some fantastic flavor combinations:

Pineapple:

Cut a pineapple half into 3/4" slices. Marinate in 2 tbs. light brown sugar and 1½ tbs. lime juice. Grill 3 to 4 minutes per side, brushing with marinade until lightly browned. Serve with coconut sorbet; garnish with toasted, sweetened, shredded coconut and fresh raspberries.

Peaches:

Halve and pit 4 firm ripe peaches. Brush cut sides with 1 tbs. melted butter and sprinkle with 1 tbs. sugar and 1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon. Grill 2 to 3 min per side, or until fruit is easily pierced with a fork. Serve with vanilla ice cream and crumbled amorette cookies.

Bananas:

Halve 2 firm-ripe bananas lengthwise (leave peel on) Brush cut sides with 1 Tbs. honey and 2 tsp. lemon juice. Grill 2 to 3 min per side until warm and lightly glazed. Remove bananas from peel and serve with chocolate ice cream and chocolate syrup.

Plums:

Halve and pit 8 ripe plums. Brush cut sides with honey. Grill 2 to 3 min per side, until warm and lightly glazed. Serve with sweetened sour cream sprinkled with crumbled gingersnaps.

National Flag Day – June 14

The idea of an annual day specifically celebrating the Flag is believed to have first originated in 1885.

BJ Cigrand, a schoolteacher, arranged for the pupils in the Fredonia, Wisconsin Public School to observe June 14 (the 108th anniversary of the official adoption of the Stars and Stripes) as "Flag Birthday."

Over the years, schools, patriotic groups and cities adopted the idea of "Flag Day" and organized special events and parades in honor of the Stars and Stripes.

On August 3rd, 1949, President Truman signed an Act of Congress designating **June 14th** of each year as **National Flag Day**

Organizing and Storing Photos

Whether you've got piles of traditional photographs or your hard drive is loaded with digital photos, trying to organize years' worth of pictures can leave you feeling unglued! But with just a little time and a few helpful tricks, you can organize your photos and keep all your precious memories safe and looking beautiful.

Today, more and more people are switching to digital cameras to capture their memories. Digital cameras, among other things, allow you to see the picture you've just taken and decide right then whether to keep it or take another picture to correct a mistake – like accidentally holding a finger in front of the lens, bad lighting or someone who blinked at the wrong instant. However, the average person still develops one roll of 24 pictures a month. Of those 24, only seven are keepers.

So the first thing you need for organizing your photos is a trashcan! When you first get your photos back or when you download them from your digital camera, sort through them and discard any that you don't like. This will cut down on the amount of organizing and labeling you'll have to do later.

After discarding the unwanted photos, organize them by year. If you're working on a computer, create a folder called "My Pictures." Most computers already have a folder with this label. Within that folder, create a new folder labeled with the year. Then within that folder, create one more folder labeled with the events. For example, "Uncle Joe's Birthday," "Hawaii Vacation" or "Julianne's Wedding." Sort your pictures accordingly.

If you develop your film or print digital pictures, store them in large envelopes marked by year. When you go back to organize past vacations into photo albums or boxes, you'll be able to find photos quickly and easily. It's also a good idea to label the outside of the envelope with the date and events that are on the photos inside.

Whenever you find an unlabeled photo, label it. If you're using a printed photo, make sure to use an acid-free photo-safe pencil or pen (available at photo processors and art-supply stores.). If working in a computer, it will make the photo easier to find if copying it to a CD or emailing it to a friend.

If you have film developed, separate the negatives from the photos. Place them in envelopes and label the outside with date and subject. Store negatives in a fire-safe box. You can also ask to have your pictures put on a CD when getting them developed. Write on the CD the date and events on the pictures and store it in a case somewhere safe. You can easily retrieve your pictures and have copies made without the hassle of having to decipher the pictures on a negative.

If you're creating an album, consider categorizing photos by event or making an album for each child in your family. Photos don't have to be organized in order. If you have a Macintosh, you can use iPhoto to create and print an album for you in an attractive binder. You can also take your favorite photos to a photocopy center. Most can put them into an attractive calendar which make great family gifts.

The key is not to overload yourself with such a large project right away. Start with more recent photos first and then work your way back through the years.

... Carpet Talk...

- Having a hard time visualizing the size of area rug you need? Put several pieces of newspaper on the floor and move them around to fit the space you're trying to cover. Tape them together when you're satisfied with the area size, measure the circumference and you'll be glad you took the time to add this extra step!

- Use walk-off mats over carpet at all entrances to your home to absorb soil and moisture. Make sure to wash these throw rugs regularly so they don't become grime-ridden sources of dirt themselves.

- When choosing carpet padding, take the advice of your carpet care professionals. Good padding offers resilience and extends the life of carpet, so when you choose padding, get the best you can. Some carpets carry warranties strongly recommending a certain grade of padding, so be sure you don't violate that warranty by going for a lesser grade.

- Pile crushing can be a serious problem if you don't move furniture on occasion to relieve the pressure. Furniture coasters help distribute weight so crushing is less concentrated. Be aware of the damage chairs or appliances on rollers or casters can do to carpet, too. Chair pads were invented for just such situations, so be sure you use them to protect the life of your pile.

- If you're moving particularly heavy furniture (think pianos, buffets and other huge pieces), minimize the trauma your carpet experiences by putting sheets of heavy cardboard or plywood between the wheels or legs of the furniture and the carpet.

- After cleaning throw rugs and carpet, wait until both are completely dry before you layer them again to short-circuit the start of mold and mildew.

- If your carpet gets prolonged exposure to sunlight, making sure the color remains as vibrant as the day it was installed requires closing window treatments during the brightest parts of the day. This simple act keeps color fading minimal, if at all.

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